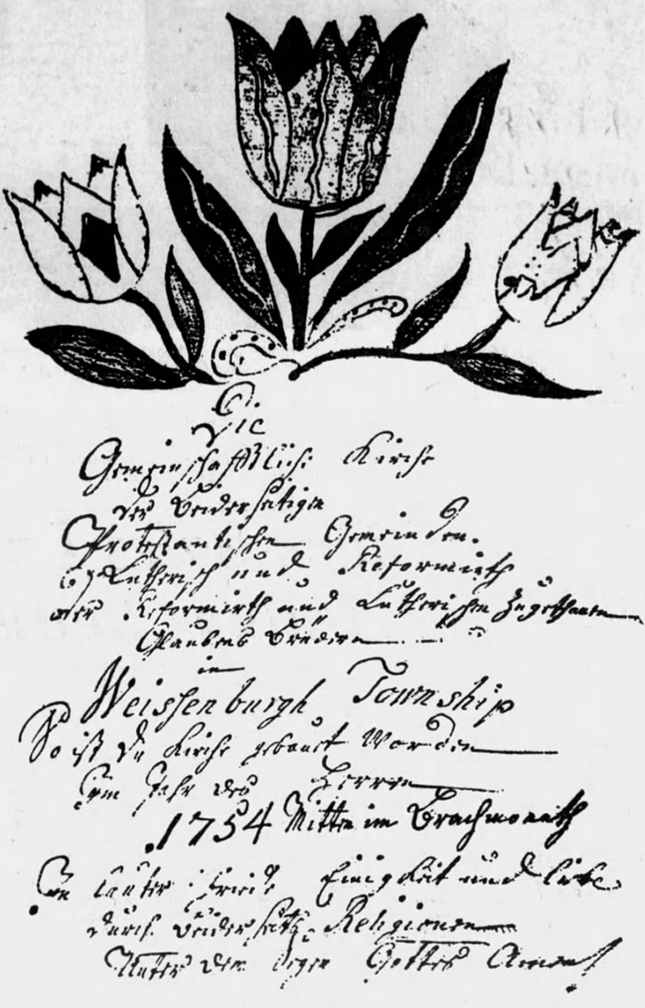
WEISENBERG CHURCH

By Raymond E. Hollenbach



Title-page of Daniel Schumacher's early Weisenberg Church record, which for many years lost, has at last found a permanent resting place in the Library of the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mt. Airy, Philadelphia.

A traveller going north from Fogelsville to Pleasant Corner, as he reaches the heights beyond the Claussville schoolhouse, may notice far off to his left something that looks like a large white monument. In his haste to go somewhere he will never know that what he has seen is not a monument, but the steeple of Weisenberg Church hidden behind the hills. The traveller gives it little thought but so do also many residents who know little of its history or of the history of the area in which they live.

Weisenberg Church is one of our older churches and dates to the middle of the 18th Century. It is one of the few that have a written church book that tells at least a part of its history. It is interesting to note that in this book the name was always written Weisseburg or Weissenburg, spelled with a "u." In the records of the township the name appears to have been spelled "berg" from the beginning. Weisenberg and Heidelberg are the only two townships in Lehigh County with names that are distinctly German, although Hanover may be considered a German name, and there is a great possibility that Salisbury and Whitehall are also of German derivation.

In Germany there are several places called Weissenburg, one in lower Alsace and another in what is now Wurtemberg in what was formerly a part of Franconia. It seems that our Weisenberg probably got its name from the latter, because of the number of settlers that came from Franconia. We are so accustomed to believing that our ancestors came from the Palatinate that we frequently forget the other places of origin.

On the gravestones in the old burial ground at Weisenberg the predominant names are Bittner and Werley. The Werley family of Weisenberg came to Pennsylvania in September 1753 on the ship "Neptune" and on the same ship were also the Hollenbachs of Weisenberg and Lynn, the Sauls of nearby Greenwich — in fact a "ship load" of passengers that came mostly from County Wertheim and from the old duchy of Franconia. The historian of the Werley family, in the Lehigh County history of 1884, mistakenly thought that they were of French origin because of an old saying, when they had a big family dinner, "das giebt einmal wieder ein Franken Fresz." He did not know that **Franken** in German refers to Franconia, not to France. The Werley and the Hollenbach families acted as sponsors at baptisms for each other's children at Nassau - bei - Weikersheim in Franconia as early as 1680, which was before the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes when so many Huguenots left France. Strangely enough, in the church records at Nassau-bei-Weikersheim the names are spelled **Woerle** and **Hollebach,** just about the same as many pronounce them in our dialect today. Also, the Zimmermans and the Stahls, who settled in Weisenberg, exchanged sponsors with the Hollenbachs in Franconia.

According to a memorandum written into the church book, Weisenberg church celebrated its One Hundredth Anniversary on September 21, 1851. This may have been stretching the years a little, for as one can read in Reverend Wm. A. Helffrich's "Lebensbild," in 1851 he and Pastor Schindel decided to celebrate the "one hundredth" anniversary of a number of the churches in their parishes, even if some of them were not exactly one hundred years old. Be this as it may, the first church building at Weisenberg was definitely erected in 1754. This church was located where the old burial ground is now. This date is confirmed by a statement which Reverend Daniel Schumacher wrote into the church book in 1764 when the record in the book was started. (This story is not intended to be a complete history of the church, or a biography of the Reverend Daniel Schumacher — for more detail the reader is referred to the 35-page history of Weisenberg township in the Lehigh County histories of 1884 and 1914).

Reverend Schumacher started the records of a number of churches in the Blue Mountain area, but since Weisenberg was his own home congregation, the decorations and the wording in the Weisenberg book are a little more elaborate and profuse than some of the others. The title page consists of a quaint tulip design, in color, with the following words:

Die
Gemeinschaftliche Kirche
der beiderseitige
Protestantische Gemeinden
Lutherisch und Reformirth
oder Reformirth und
Lutherischen zugethanen
Glaubens Bruedern
in
WEISSENBURGH
TOWNSHIP
So ist die Kirche
gebauet worden
Im Jahr des Herrn
1754
Mitten im Brachmonath
In lauter Friede Einigkeit
und Liebe durch Beiderseits
Religionen Unter dem Segen
Gottes Amen

This is followed on the next page with the following statement by the Reverend Daniel Schumacher:

"Die Kirche ist eingeweihet und eingesegnet worden"
"Der Herr Pfarrer Schwitzer Rudolph Kittweiler an Reformirter Seits und der Herr Pfarrer Jacob Friedrich Schertlin in Makunschy an Evangel. Lutherischer Seits haben zu erst in diesem Gottes Hausz gepredigt. Disz confirmirt und attestiret Fideliter Daniel Schumacher pro hoc tempore Divini Minister Ecclesiae Lutherarae in Provinicia Pensylvania 1764"

The wording hardly needs any translation to most readers except that the church was built as a "union" Lutheran and Reformed church and was completed "im Brachmonath," that is, in the month of June (in the year 1754). The Reformed minister was Rudolph Kittweiler of Switzerland, who wrote his name "Hans Rudolph Kittweiler" when he came to Pennsylvania in September 1749. He preached over a wide area and died in 1764. He is buried at Great Swamp church near Spinnerstown. The Lutheran pastor at the dedication wrote his name "M. Jacob Friderich Schertlein" when he came to Pennsylvania in September 1752. The "M" before his name stands for "Master of Arts." He too preached over quite a large area and was described as "from Macungie," which seems to indicate that he was not considered the regular preacher at Weisenberg.

No further mention will be made here of any of the other early preachers, except Reverend Daniel Schumacher to whom we are indebted for much of the information used here. Daniel Schumacher came to Pennsylvania from Nova Scotia in 1753, where he had been a Lutheran preacher but left, according to his own words, "on account of a dispute between teachers and preachers there." He came to Pennsylvania through the port of New York, travelling overland to Philadelphia where he met Reverend Henry Melchior Muhlenberg. From the very beginning they appear to have disagreed.

(To Be Continued)

WEISENBERG CHURCH

By Raymond E. Hollenbach

(Continued)

On page 10 of the Weisenberg Church record Daniel Schumacher drew and colored another design of tulips and flowers, around two quotations from the Scriptures, and a blessing on the elders and deacons whose names appear on the succeeding page. The list is arranged in two columns, with the following wording and spelling. It is not entirely clear who were the elders and who were the deacons:

Petrus Herber an der Reformirten Seite in Weisseburgh
Johannes Corell in Bercks Hill reform.
Michael Braucher an Lutherischer Seite in Weisseburg
Nikolaus Kemp in Weisseburg Reformirt
Martin Buchmann in Berks Hill Luth.
Jacob Herger in Weisseburg Reform.
Michael Biber in Weisseburg Luther
Juerg Sieger an Luth Seit
Juerg Knoedler an Luth Seit
Johan Adam Klein, Luth Seits
Sebastian Werle Luth Seite
Valentin Grammlich
Jacob Gruenewalt, senior

Andreas Niesz an Lutherischer Seite in Weisseburg
Christian Mueller an reformirter seits in Linn taunshib
Georg Schueszler in Weisseburg, reformirth
Jacob Holby Weisseburg Reformirt
Eberhard Schmidth in Weisseburg Evang. Lutherisch
Johann Juerg Braucher
Henrich Kregeloh an Reformirter Seits
Juerg Kindt an Reform.
Johann Juerg Luth. Seits
Andreas Buchman

In a church record of a Lutheran or Reformed church the baptisms were considered the most important part, so Pastor Schumacher wrote another page as a suitable introduction (the spelling is his):

Hier koennen nun die Kinder
Von Anno Domini 1754
da die Kirche ist
erbaut worden
eingeragristiert werden
und getauft sind worden
zu underer friedlich
und einigen
Gemeinde Reformirth
und Lutherischen
Religion zugethan
Die zu der Kirche
zu Weissenburgh
Northampton County
gehorren.

First there was a space left for children that had been baptized by Pastors Kittweiler and Michael — but only two baptisms are entered into this space, the first that of Henrich Kreglo, a son of Henrich Kreglo and his wife, Barbara Hobb, born Dec. 4, 1761, and 2nd, the baptism of Anna Margreda Holben, daughter of Jacob Holben and wife **Moresin** (probably Mohr), born Dec. 24, 1743. The Holben family had come to Pennsylvania in 1742 and the child had probably been baptized elsewhere before the family came to Weissenberg. All in all the Reformed baptisms are very irregular and total only about three pages up to the year 1800.

After another introduction in verses both in German and Latin, probably of Reverend Schumacher's own composition, the Lutheran baptisms begin. To illustrate his style and spelling the whole entry of the first baptism is copied here:

"December, oder Christmonat den 11, ward in der Weisseburger Kirche zur heiligen Taufe gebracht Maria Magdalena, nachdem es 7 wochen alt war und von mir Pfarrer Daniel Schumacher nach gehaltener Probpredigt als dasz erste Kind in der Kirche getauft Philipp Scholl der Vatter und Catharina als Mutter des Kindes des Kindes Taufzeugen — sie als Eltern waren selbst die Taufzeugen"

This entry was written into the book in 1764 but the baptism took place in 1757. It all began in a very promising and auspicious manner, but the family historian who is looking for a record of his family will soon be disappointed. About six years later, in 1770, Schumacher's entries end and except for several short sporadic periods there are few baptisms recorded until the 1790's. This mute evidence to a troublesome period not only this congregation but a number of other congregations in the area went through. At this date no one knows just what the difficulty was, nor is it important. There was trouble not only between Lutherans and Reformed people, but also between several factions of Lutherans. In 1769 the ministerium sent into the area a young candidate for the ministry, Johann Georg Jung, who had just come from Germany. If this was not some cause of the trouble it at least added fuel to the fire. The first result was the withdrawal of most of Reformed people from Weisenberg and the organization of Lowhill church, which at first was exclusively Reformed. The following year, 1770, Henry Melchior Muhlenberg made a personal visit to the area, only the second in his career. A record of this visit is found under dates July 5th to July 10th of Muhlenberg's journals.

"July 9, Monday. Squire (Klotz) arrived early in the morning and wished to accompany us to the four little congregations which had hitherto been served and had been ruined by a scandalous vagrant preacher. This preacher had been dismissed, the congregations applied to the Ministerium . . . But the dismissed preacher has a small farm of his own in this region . . . and continues to preach here and there on Sundays in houses and barns."

That is one side of the story. At Jerusalem Church in Stony Run one group locked Schumacher's group out of the church and as a result the barred group built their own church, Friedens or the "White Church." No one now knows what the argument was, but the church records of the two churches at Stony Run show that in the seven years Rev. Daniel Schumacher remained as preacher there were three times as many baptisms in his church as there were at the church from which he was barred, indicating that at least a majority of the local people were on his side. But this is another story The whole controversy continued and in 1772 Richard Penn, one of William Penn's sons, addressed a letter to each of the several congregations, suggesting Justices Sebastian Zimmerman and Lewis Klotz as arbitrators to settle the dispute. The letter addressed to the "White Church" which the congregation still has in its possession, reads as follows:

"Gentlemen.

It has been represented to me that an unhappy difference has arisen among you with Respect to your Church and Ministers. I am always grieved to hear of these religious Differences, especially in new settled places, as They hurt the Interest of true Religion and good Order, And, as I am requested by some of the good People of both Parties, to recommend an amicable Settlement of all your Differences I willingly undertake the Task — not at all doubting but that, upon a proper Consideration of the Matter, You will soon return to your former State of Harmony & Friendship with one another. I am told Mr. Sebastian Zimmerman and Mr. Lewis Klotz are well known to You, and Persons for whom you have an Esteem. Might you not then refer all your Matters in Difference to these two Gentlemen, and let them know, that, as I now mention them to you, so I request, if You should think proper to chuse them for Arbitrators, that They will be pleased to accept of the Arbitration, and put an End to everything which may lend to disturb your future Union and Agreement with one Another.

I am, Gentlemen!
Your most obed't Servant
RICHd PENN "
Philad. Feby. 15, 1772

William Penn tried to provide freedom of worship, but he could not guarantee tolerance. In Massachusetts Roger Williams was forced out of the colony and established the colony of Rhode Island. Here in Pennsylvania the matter was much simpler — if one group disagreed with another, one group merely withdrew to the hill next by and established another church, or if they thought it necessary, another denomination. The troubles, however, lingered on. The young pastor, Johann Georg Jung, soon left, and at least for a short time Schumacher was back at Weisenberg, as is indicated by a list of young people he confirmed in 1773.

Separate pages were provided for in the Weisenberg record book for lists of young people confirmed. This again was headed with a page of quotations and verse, some presumably of Rev. Daniel Schumacher's own composition.

(To Be Concluded)

DER KERCHEGANG IN ALTER ZEIT

Es duht eem gans vun Herze leed,
Wann mer ans Alte denkt;
Nau geht fascht alles iwwerzwerg,
In Land un Schtadt, in Haus un Kerch —
Mer fiehlt sich recht gekrenkt.

Denk yuscht emol ans Kerchegeh!
Wie waar's in alter Zeit?
Darch Hitz un Kelt, darch Iss Alles gange, Gross un Klee,
Schtaab un Schnee,
Bei reich' un aarme Leit.

Mer iss net yehtig nei gerennt,
Gekleppert mit de Schuh;
Schee iss mer gange, sacht un bleed,
Im Schtuhl sich leis in Hut gebet —
Sell wert nau net geduh!

Ins Lied hot alles eigeschtimmt —
Sell Singe waar en Freed!
Nau duht fascht niemand 's Maul meh uff —
Zum Singe gehn die Bordkerch nuff
Paar Buwe un paar Meed!

Mit Demut hot mer zugehorcht
Was aa der Parre saagt;
Nau sitzt mer schtolz wie Dschurymann,
Guckt, wie der Mann doch schwetze kann!
Un wie er sich betraagt!

Die alte Wohrhet hot mer geliebt,
Un selwer aagewennt;
Nau denkt mer, als mer schleefrig sitzt:
Wie doch der Mann die Sinder schwitzt!
Er gebt's 'ne yuschtement!

Un wann mer in der Sity wohnt,
Schliesst mer sich an kee Ort:
Wo yuscht 'n grosser Schwetzer brillt,
Do werd gewiss die Kerch gefillt,
Un unser eens iss dort!

Was Hutlerei! was Hutlerei!
Die Leit hen leichte Kepp;
'S iss alles leer — kee Saft, kee Salz,
'N Brote ohne Gschmack un Schmalz,
'N schlappiges Geschlepp!

FROM HARBAUGH'S HARFE

The illustration, from the first edition of Harbaugh's HARFE, 1870, shows the old custom of "praying into the hat" on entering church for worship.

HAUSBUTZE

Im Friehyohr un im Harrebscht
Gebt es en iwwli Zeit,
Wu all die Weibsleit aecte
Als waere sie net gscheit.

Sie raase un sie dowe,
Sie renne hie un her;
Es gebt en mechtich Butze,
En Schrubble un Gekehr.

Sie gucke wie die Hexe,
Sie schmeise alles naus;
Die Menner un die Kinner,
Die hen kee Blatz im Haus.

Es iss en arriges Wese,
Doch iss es ball verbei;
Noh gebt es widder Friede
Un alles guckt wie nei.

— Louise A. Weltzel

DER PIHWIE

Pihwie, Pihwie, Pihwittitie!
Ei, Pihwie, bischt zerick?
Nau hock dich uf der Poschte hie
Un sing dei Morgeschtick.

Hoscht lang verweilt im Summerland,
Bischt seit Oktower fort;
Bischt drunne ordlich gut bekannt?
Wie geht's de Veggel dort?

'S is schee dort uf de Orenschbeem:
Gell, dort gebt's gar kee Schnee?
Doch fiehlscht du als recht krank for heem
Wann's Zeit is for ze geh!

Bischt doch uns all recht willkumm do;
Denk, du bischt net zu frieh,
Der Morge guckt emol net so —
Gell net, du klee Pihwie?

Pihwie! wo bauscht du des Johr hi'?
Kannscht wehle, wo du witt;
Witt du am Haus 'n Plaetzeli?
Ich dheel dir's willig mit.

Ich geb d'r neier Dreck for nix,
Geilshoor un Flax un Helm;
Nemmscht's ennihau! — Ich kenn dei Tricks,
Du schmaerter kleener Schelm!

Des is juscht G'schpass, mei Pihwiefreind,
Ich rechel dich kee Dieb!
Hettscht mit meim Gold dei Nescht geleint,
Du waerscht m'r juscht so lieb.

'N Fruchtjohr ohne dich, Pihwie,
Waer wie 'n leeri Welt!
Dei Diensecht, mei liewes Veggeli,
Bezahlt m'r net mit Geld!

Pihwie, wie'n milde Luft du bringscht!
Die Friehjohrssunn, wie schee!
'S geht nau, weil du mol morgets singscht,
Kee Winterdage meh.

Pihwie, Pihwie, Pihwittitie!
Bin froh, du bischt zerick;
Nau hock dich uff d'r Poschte hie,
Un sing dei Morgeschtick.

— Henry Harbaugh

The above is from Harbaugh's **Harfe**, for generations a household book among the Pennsylvania Germans, published first in 1870. — In the glossary prepared for this collection the **Pihwie** is defined as "the fly-catcher" (Muscicapa phebe), a small bird recognized by our Pennsylvania German forefathers as a sure herald of spring. They did not know this bird in their fatherland, and so they called it **Pihwie,** imitating its cry. This is also echoed in the English name pewit. This small bird also known as the phoebe. The upper portion of its body is dark-olive colored, but with lower part bright yellow.

In the dialect it is often called **der Biwwi.** The late William J. Rupp in a most interesting article about Pennsylvania German birdnames (ECK, April 9, 1949) points out that our forefathers on coming to Pennsylvania found here some of the birds they had known in their homeland and retained the names as illustrated in **Larrich, Schwalm, Zaahschlipper, Dischdelfink.** But others were borrowed from the English with dialect coloration such as **Riedvoggel, Goldfink, Tschickedie.** But the larger group of birds was named in the dialect for their color or some other physical characteristic as **Bloovoggel, Blutfink, Goldämschel, Katze-eil, Schtumpschwans.** Then some took onomatopoetic or imitative names such as **Wibberwill, Zippche, Gilderle** and of course the **Biwwi,** or **Pihwie,** in the above poem.

WEISENBERG CHURCH

By RAYMOND E. HOLLENBACH

(Conclusion)

In his Weisenberg Church book the Rev. Daniel Schumacher provided separate pages for lists of young people confirmed. These were again headed with a page of quotations and verses, presumably the Rev. Daniel Schumacher's own composition. The first list of confirmands reads as follows:

1760
Domini Quasimodogeniti
Sontag nach Ostern

Heinrich Steigerwalt
Johann Jacob Schuck
Yuerg Adam Hanns
Michael Zimmerman
Johannes Spengler
Anna Margaretha Steuerwaldten
Rosina Barbara Etzlerin
Anna Maria Flachen
Maria Elisabeth Sprechern
Eva Margaretha Holtzin

In Pastor Schumacher's private record this list includes three more names: Barbara and Christian Kaub and Maria Margaretha Klauss. After two more lists by Schumacher there are no more lists until 1818. However, in Schumacher's private record there are lists for 1763, 1764 and 1766, and as already mentioned, one list for 1773.

Following this come the pages on which marriages were to be recorded. The first page has a suitable heading and introduction but most of the space is unused and only six marriages are recorded. One of these is very interesting, however, in that one might say here is one family which furnishes the basis of a story of how America grew. It is the marriage of Jacob Bachman, a widower, and Maria Catharina Schmedder, widow of Wilhelm Schmedder, in 1764. Wilhelm Schmedder, or Schmetter, died in Albany Township in 1760, leaving a widow and ten children. Jacob Bachman had come to Pennsylvania in 1743 at the age of 23 years. His wife had died leaving him with a number of children. (When he died in 1789 his will mentioned nine children of his own.) Some of the Schmeter children were already grown up and two of them, Jacob Schmetter and George Schmetter had served with Captain Nicholas Wetherhold in the French and Indian War. With so many children there was not enough room under one roof. The Bachman children stayed at home and a few years later became the nucleus of the Lowhill Church. The Schmetter children moved elsewhere and the name is now unknown in the area. With the experience George Schmetter had in the French and Indian War he was made captain of one of the two companies of militia from Heidelberg Township, and as such, while fighting the Indians on the frontier, had an opportunity to see the beautiful Wyoming valley along the upper Susquehanna. As a result, the Schmetter family moved there after the war was over and descendants are still numerous there. However, that area also soon became populated and the pioneer spirit was great. Many of the family moved into western Pennsylvania where the spelling was changed to Smetter, Smetters, Smathers, etc., and from there later into the midwest and the far west where their Pennsylvania German origin has long since been forgotten.

The last portion of the book was reserved for deaths and burials, but here again the intentions were good. There are recorded only five funerals. A survey of the old graveyard at Weisenberg shows that there are approximately 650 graves but only 221 gravestones. What a valuable record this would have been for family historians if it had been kept! The very last page has some more of Schumacher's "art" and "literary" work, with some verses and then a scroll and some lines around the words:

Mensch
Bedencke dasz Ende
so
Wirst du nimmer Uebles thun.

A history of a church is the story of its members, and the story of its members is also a history of the township in which the church was located. In the case of Weisenberg the history is divided into two parts because there were two churches of equal importance — Ziegel Church and the Weisenberg Church. It is not necessary to go into any detail because the Lehigh County history of 1884 has a 35-page story of the township and its two churches, and this is repeated almost word for word in the history of 1914. There are, of course, some errors, as for instance, the history of 1884 contains a long list of German immigrants who arrived in the 1730's and are supposed to have settled in Weisenberg. Actually, these are persons with the same family names only. An accurate check of individual names shows that approximately two-thirds of the families that settled in Weisenberg arrived between 1749 and 1755. The French and Indian War which began in 1755 stopped all German immigration. By that time Weisenberg was already so thickly settled that the Indians did not venture any attacks like the ones which brought death and destruction to Albany and Lynn.

In the Revolutionary War there were enough men in Weisenberg to form two companies of militia — the Third Company and the Eighth Company of the Third Battalion (later renumbered Sixth battalion) of Northampton County militia. The men in the Third Company were from that part of the township in which Weisenberg church is located, and the men in the Eighth Company mostly from the Ziegel Church area. At Ziegel Church the Daughters of the American Revolution erected a suitable memorial with the names of sixteen of these men. At Weisenberg there are gravestones for nine men who served in the Revolution, but many others lie in unmarked graves, and even the metal markers intended for the graves of soldiers have become misplaced, probably by those who cannot read the German inscriptions, and are found on graves of women and children. Among the soldiers buried here is Captain Christian Marborger of the Third Company and Nicholas Werley who was a sergeant of that company; also privates Michael Werley, Jacob Holben, Abraham Gruenewald, Theobold Holben, Andreas Bittner and Simon George. Simon George lived in Lowhill and was in the militia from that township. There is also a gravestone for Peter Weida "ein Revolution Soldat" who was a private in Washington's Continental Army.

In the War of 1812 Weisenberg Township furnished more than an average quota. These names are found in the Sixth Series, Penna. Archives (Volume 7, page 551 and Volume 8, page 683. None of these are mentioned in any of our Lehigh County histories. A company of these men, made up from Weisenberg and adjoining territory, was under the command of Captain Nicholas Derr of Weisenberg Church, with Jacob Grunewalt, also from Weisenberg Church, as his first lieutenant. There are gravestones for five of the men — privates Andreas Buchman, Theobald Werley and Solomon Holben and Lieutenant Jacob Gruenewald and Captain Nicholas Derr. The last time the writer was there the gravestone of Captain Derr was broken into three parts and may now have been removed.

Among other graves of interest is that of Johannes Seiberling (1783-1875) ancestor of the founder of the Seiberling rubber company, of Ohio, which until various consolidations, was one of the largest manufacturers of automobile tires in our country. Another grave of interest is that of the congregation's old schoolmaster. Pennsylvania Germans have often been criticized for resisting the adoption of the public school system, but the more one hears about the old faithful congregational schoolmasters the easier it is to understand this. Weisenberg Township did not adopt the public school system until 1848 but under the law it was possible for the congregation to retain partial control over its school until 1877. Until that year the school was kept in the farmhouse belonging to the church, and then a new school house was built by the township on the church property. The old schoolmaster who served here so many years was Ignatz H. G. Busse. The congregation in grateful remembrance erected a gravestone for him which reads:

I.H.G. Busse, geboren
in Preusen, Apr. 19, 1772
May 5, 1857
85 Jahre 14 Tage
Gewidmet von der
Gemeinde
die er 42 Jahre als
Lehrer bediente

Pastor Daniel Schumacher who began the church record here, who was a resident of the community, and who served numerous churches along the Blue Mountain from the Schuylkill to the Lehigh, lies buried in an unmarked grave. What more suitable project could there be for one of our local historical societies than to erect a modest memorial in his honor!

Royersford
March 1967